

## The Lesson Story

But how changed all would be when he left it. True it had been only a few short weeks, but those weeks had meant much to Jesus. In those weeks had occurred the Baptism, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Temptation, the Purging of the Temple, and the beginning of his life work in the country of Judea and among the Samaritans. He had in this time awakened to his mission. To the old town unchanged by the events which had so changed his own life Jesus now returned. His custom had always been to attend the synagogue (meeting house) in his own town. And now he observed the same custom. Jesus differed from some now-a-days, who when they have been off to school or been engaged in some special work seem to think it bemeans them to attend the old church where they were wont to go when children. But thither Jesus went as tho nothing had happened. Tho he was the newly-manifested Messiah, tho he had performed miracles, tho multitudes had hung wondering on his lips, yet it was not beneath him to attend the old meeting house and assist in its humble services.

And this day the chief man of the synagogue handed Jesus a roll of Scripture and he stood up to read and to preach.

## His First Sermon

For a text he chose one familiar to all Jews as a prophecy concerning the Messiah for whom all the Jews were looking. It read thus: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Now let us bear in mind some things and we can better understand what a sensation the reading of these words and Jesus' words upon them, must have produced. Consider, (1) that this was a Sabbath year in which every one was resting all the year; (2) that Jesus had just before been anointed with the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove; (3) that the people were groaning under the oppressions of a foreign ruler, of a corrupt high priesthood, and of senseless traditions of the elders which it was impossible for any to not break, and (4) that the Jews were expecting and praying for One who was to fulfil these very words. Then hear the calm, earnest words of Jesus, the words of one who believed all he said, "This day are these words fulfilled in your ears."

The simple people of Nazareth had heard of his wonderful deeds at Jerusalem and they had come to hear his first sermon. And this was the message. Is it any wonder that "they wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth." And their surprise was all the greater when they remembered that this was the son of Joseph their village carpenter of the long ago. But Jesus had not spoken that they might wonder at his gracious words. His business was far more serious than charming a multitude by

his words. And as they were delighting themselves at his fine eloquence Jesus read their desire for a miracle also. They had had their wonder appeased by the *marvel of his words*, now they would have their love of the wonderful satisfied by a *wonder of his power* such as they had heard of his doing at Capernaum. He said, "I know you are thinking of the old proverb, Physician heal thyself. You think that I ought, since I gave the Capernaumites a chance to behold a miracle and wonder at it, that I ought to please you by doing the same thing here. But you are entirely wrong in your supposition that I worked a wonder there simply that they might wonder. I did it for them because they had faith, not curiosity. A miracle worker, a magician might be acceptable in his own country, but a prophet never. If I chose to appease your idle curiosity I would be just the man for you, but since I am a prophet, not to minister to your vain desire for a wonder, but to teach you righteousness and godliness you have no place for me."

There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, but why was he sent only to one in Zarepath a heathen city in the heathen land of Sidon? There were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha, but why did he cleanse only the heathen Naaman? In both cases simply because the heathens, the widow of Zarepath and Naaman of Syria, had faith while those of Israel did not." Of course the inference was plain as to why he performed miracles at Capernaum and would not at Nazareth,—faith in those of Capernaum and the lack of it in those of Nazareth. O, how many still go to church to be charmed by eloquence rather than to receive by faith the prophetic blessings of righteousness and a holy life!

## The Effect of the Sermon

The effect on such may be imagined. Were they subdued by these plain words into faith and prayer for holiness? No. "And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things." They rose up forthwith, hustled Jesus out of the synagogue and with all the angry dispute of orientals they thrust him forth out of the city, led him toward a cliff near the city with the intention of throwing him down headlong and kill him? Why? Because he had told them a truth which hurt and wounded their pride. Who was he that he,—their village carpenter, whom they had known since childhood,—should tell them,—his own townsmen, who, forsooth, had been his customers, that they did not have as much faith as the men of Capernaum, that they had not as good a right to see a miracle from his hands as the Capernaumites? Had not they cheered him when they heard how he,—their fellow townsmen,—had routed the grasping Judeans from the Temple at Jerusalem? And he would serve them thus! They forget the gracious words, at which but a few moments before they were wondering. They only remembered his taunting rebuke

and his lowly position as carpenter. Doubtless, they thought that his absence had spoiled him, that he was putting on airs. They would teach him a lesson. He should not insult his own people like that in their own synagogue. But their murderous purpose was not to be accomplished. We do not know how, but "He passing thru the midst of them went his way." He, to those who would hear plain truth, who had faith. They, back to their selfish pride and prejudice. He, to trouble them but once more and extend his gracious mercy to them. They, to oblivion and inglorious silence.

And yet this old story of Christ's rejection at Nazareth is repeated so many times among men today.

## Lesson Applied

1. Some men love sleight of hand and wonderful things, more than righteousness and truth.
2. You can get more men of a sort out to a prize fight, a display of magic, a spiritualist seance or a circus than to a mass meeting for moral reform.
3. Christ rejected goes elsewhere. What if he should not come back to Nazareth?
4. Don't conclude just because your neighbors do not accept you, that therefore you are a prophet. You may be, but that is not the proof.
5. Church going is a good custom for people to have.
6. Jesus came to help the unfortunate.
7. Christ's power is greater than those of the men of a whole city. Let us trust his power more.

J. L. GILLIN.

## Church News

## McLouth, Kans.

We closed our series of meetings at McLouth with a full house and ten confessions. Of these, eight received baptism before we left. Praise the Lord for His goodness to us in all the battle. No meeting that we ever held closed with a greater promise of a future harvest. We never, yet, found a town of its size where more seeds of fanaticism have been scattered in the name of religion than at McLouth. The religion of Jesus draws men, does not repel them. Many things done in His name to-day are extremely repulsive to the pure and holy.

We have tried to sow good seed. May it grow and flourish above the tares and yield its harvest of rejoicing. It is the unanimous opinion of the church that the meeting was timely and well worth all our time and prayers, toil and sacrifice, saying nothing about the accessions, which alone made it a glorious meeting.

God bless the beloved of the church at McLouth, who by downright Christian living have placed themselves more nearly above the reproach of men than any other in the town. May grace continue to abound among them.

LOUIS S. BAUMAN.